The Huld Manuscript - ÍB 383 4to

A modern transcription, decryption and translation.

Justin Foster © 06/2015

Foreword:

The Icelandic manuscript called "Huld", presumably from the word "hulda" meaning *secrecy*, was made by Geir Vigfússon in 1860. It is one of many dated from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries, featuring collections of runic alphabets and/or magic symbols and sigils that were used in earlier times. This particular one stands apart in its artistic presentation and skill of handwriting. There are 27 leaves, written and drawn by hand on each side – the pages are numbered to 60 with the sequence interrupted in the middle by what is likely to be pages that were blank and removed for that reason. The first half comprises a list of 329 runic alphabets, some recognisable and some very cryptic. The second half comprises a comparitively small set of 30 "stafir", an Icelandic word meaning *characters* or *staves*, which are symbols, sigils, insignia and bindrunes (a string of runic symbols), along with Icelandic and crypticly coded text that provides titles, descriptions and instructions for each case. In present times these symbols are referred to as "galdrastafir" – the word "galdur" meaning *magic*.

This presentation focuses only on the second half of the manuscript and aims to provide a more complete and accurate English translation of the text, and hopefully will be a platform from which further exploration can be embarked upon. Mine is not the only translation of this manuscript, nor is it the only similar manuscript that has been translated into English (you can find several others published by Strandagaldur, the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft).

Previous attempts at investigation and translation of this manuscript have lacked in accuracy and have led to subsequent errors. The first endeavour was by Ólafur Davíðsson in 1903, when his essay titled "Isländische Zauberzeichen und Zauberbücher" was translated from Icelandic for the German journal *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, Vol. 13. In it he writes that the stafir were drawn for him, as was most likely the text, and this has resulted in some inconsistancies. This essay became a secondary source for Steven Flowers in his book *The Galdrabók - An Icelandic Grimoire*, 1989. His book now had a 4th generation text translation of Huld and the images presented in it were low resolution

photocopies from the 1903 essay. Copies and extracts from Flowers book have spread across the internet as interest in the subject grew and these have been used as inspiration for art and other commentary, making the errors somewhat ubiquitous. Flowers 2nd revised edition of this book in 2005 did much to further his translation of the primary focus of his book, a manuscript called "Galdrabók", but did not fix any of the Huld problems.

It should be noted that the manuscript is in itself a copy from earlier sources, and mostly likely several generations along from any actual grimoire (of which there are very few now in existence). These same symbols appear in other "collection" manuscripts which upon close scrutiny reveal that they were closer to source grimoires. The two of particular importance are Galdrakver - Lbs 4627 8vo (available online from National and University Library of Iceland) and Galdraskraeda by Jochum "Skuggi" Eggertsson (published in magazine form in 1940 and recently reworked by Arnar Fells as a graphics presentation). Hopefully a comparitive study to these other manuscripts will emerge at a later date.

In this work I have occasionally corrected the spelling of Old Icelandic where this makes translation to English easier. Additional characters that I have added are placed within square brackets. Coded text (see below) is written in italic. Text that is taken from within a symbol is marked with angled quotation marks (guillemets). Notes are added where meanings would be unclear otherwise.

Considerable thanks is extended to those colleagues and associates that reviewed my translations and provided comments that assisted in the process of bringing this to work into publication. Particular thanks goes to Christopher Smith for providing the letter transpositions key and Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir for her many suggestions and corrections.

Letter Transpositions:

𝔞	𝔟	𝔠	𝔡	𝔢	𝔤	𝔥	𝔦	𝔨	𝔩	𝔪	𝔫	𝔬	𝔭	𝔯	𝔰 𝔰	𝔱	𝔲	𝔳	𝔵	𝔶	𝔷	𝔞𝔢
a	*b*	*c*	*d*	*e*	*g*	*h*	*i*	*k*	*l*	*m*	*n*	*o*	*p*	*r*	*s*	*t*	*u*	*v*	*x*	*y*	*z*	*æ*
	B	C	D		G		I	K	L	M	N	O	Þ	R	S			V	X	Y	Z	Æ
ö	d	e	b	e	t	k	l	h	i	n	m	þ	o	s	r	f	v	u	a	v	g	ö

Medieval Icelandic Runic Alphabet:

ᛇ	ᛒ	ᛞ	ᛖ	ᚠ	ᚵ	ᚼ	ᛁ	ᚴ	ᛚ	ᛘ	ᚿ	ᚬ	ᚦ	ᚱ	ᛋ	ᛏ	ᚢ	ᚡ	ᚫ	ᚽ
a	b	d	e	f	g	h	i	k	l	m	n	o	þ	r	s	t	u	v	æ	ö

There are occasional variations to the above tables, such as in item IV: Vatnahlífir, where **𝔱 = g** and **𝔷 = f**, and other one off differences that seem to be just mistakes or hard to read characters. Also note that in tables **i** can be a **j** or **y**, all vowels can be their accented version, **p** is usually **þ** and **d** is usually **ð**. Finally, the old Latin for **s** usually appears in the manuscript as the "**long s = ſ**" variant, which looks like an f with no cross bar.

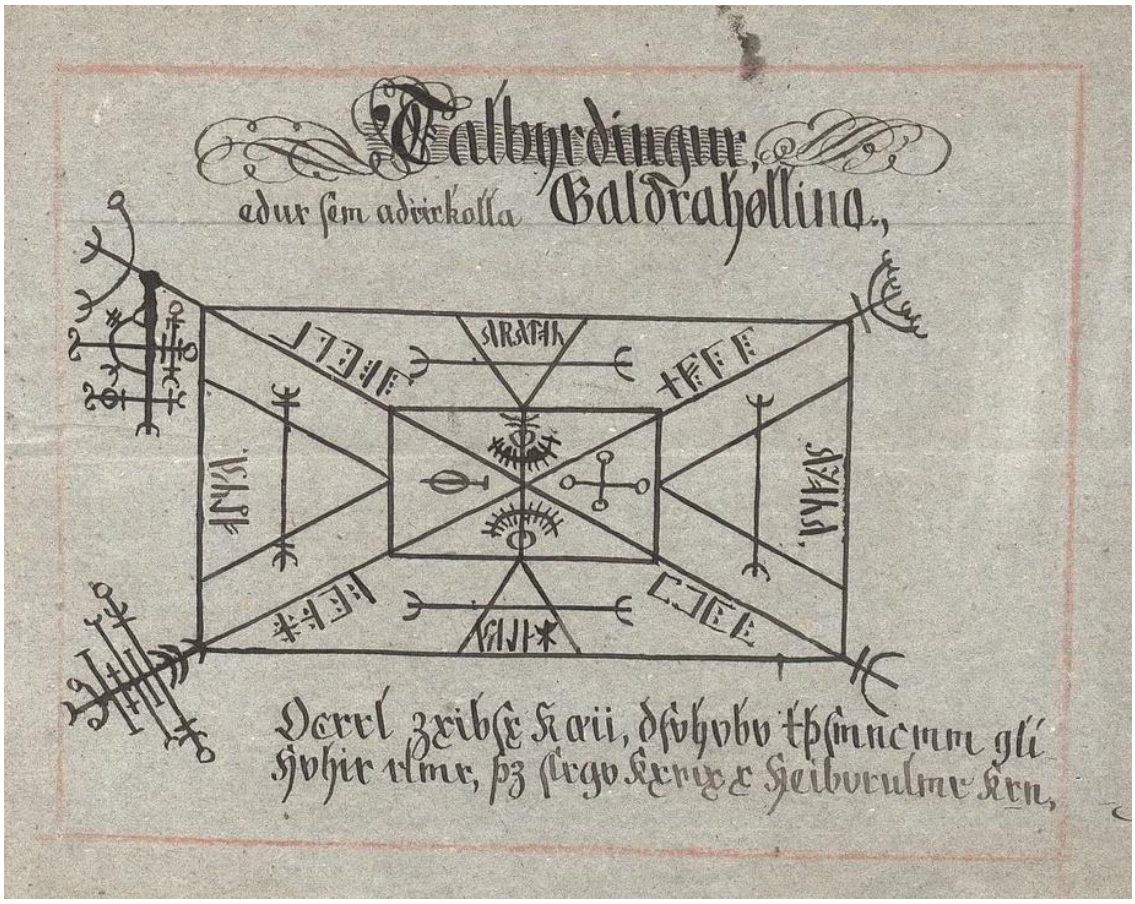
All images are a direct reproduction from National and University Library of Iceland manuscript service and are copied with their permission. My own enhancements have been added.

My research goes mostly unfunded except for very rare contributions.

Please buy my very small priced 2016 revised edition. It includes additions and a few minor fixes at:

http://users.on.net/~starbase/galdrastafir/shop.htm

With your help I can continue researching, interpreting and translating related text on this fascinating subject. While there be sure to check out my other products and services.



Talbyrdingur, edur sem adrir kalla Galdrahollina.

Þessi galdra höll, brukuðu fornmenn til kukls sína, og ristu[1] *á keldusvíns huð.*

« *Araton, Adona, Helga, Olma* »[2]

Reckoning Table. Or which others call Magic-hall.

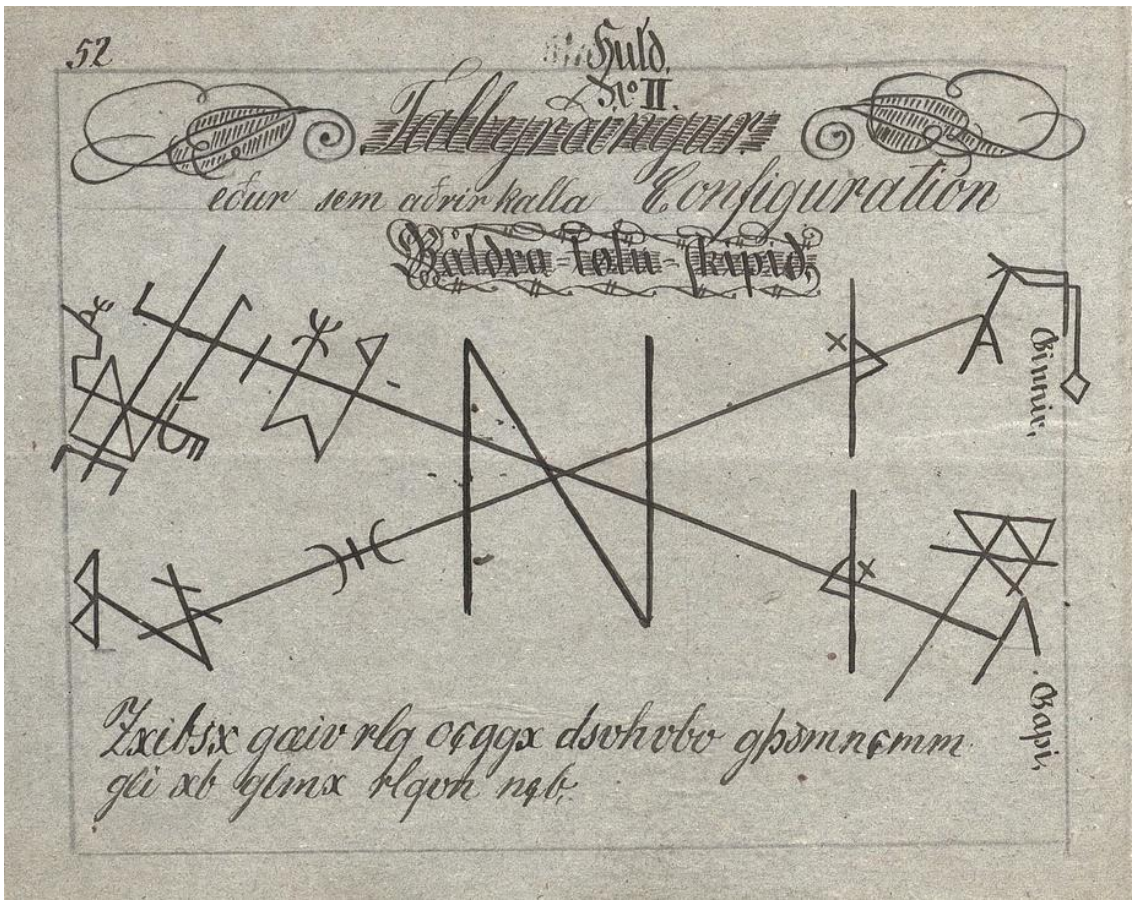
This “magic-hall” the ancients used for their sorcery, and scratched it on water rail[3] skin.

« Araton, Adona, Helga, Olma »

[1] Rist / ríst are often unclear on their exact meaning, which can be either carve or scratch, depending on what it is that is being worked on.

[2] From top going clockwise are these four names, presumably of angels.

[3] Water rail = Rallus aquaticus, a wetlands bird now extinct in Iceland, but still seen widely across Europe.



No. II Talbyrdingur

edur sem adrir kalla… Configuration

Galdra tölu skipið

Galdra tölu sit þetta brukuðu fornmenn til að týna situm með.[4]

« Ginnir. Gapi. »[5]

No. II. Reckoning Table.

Or which others call… Configuration

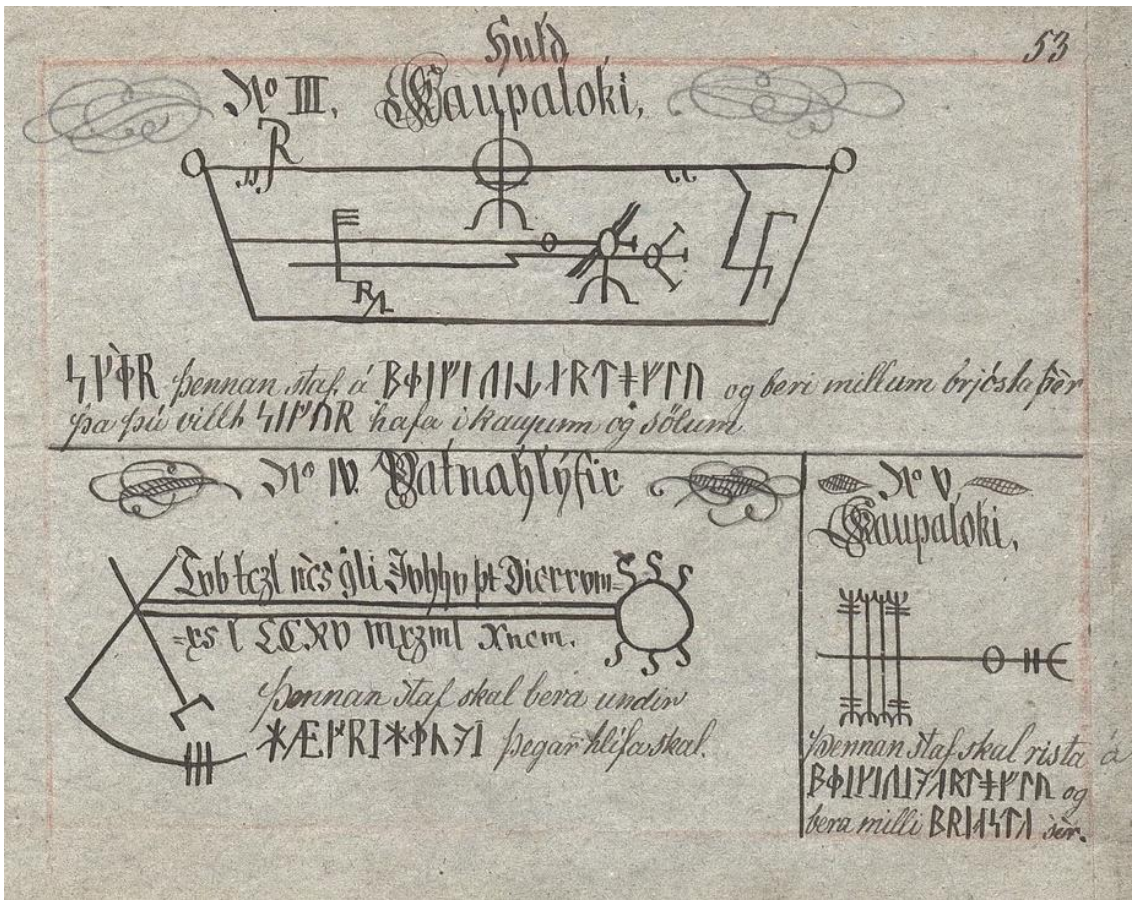
Ship of Magic Numbers.

The ancients used this in order to destroy ships.

« Alure. Gape. »

[4] The code words “sit” and “situm” undoubtedly should be “skip”and “skipum”.

[5] It is uncertain if these words have some special meaning by themselves or if they are related to two other galdrastafir called Ginnir and Angurgapi, shown in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* Vol I, page 446 et seq. by Jón Árnason, 1862.



No. III. Kaupaloki. *Sker* þennan staf á *beykiviðar-töflu* og ber í millum[6] brjósta þér þa þú villt *sigur* hafa í kaupum og sölum.

No. IV. Vatnahlífir. Þennan staf skal bera undir *hægri-hendi* þegar hlífa skal.

« *Guð gefi mér til lukku og blessunar í Iesu Nafni Amen.* »

No. V. Kaupaloki. Þennan staf skal rista á *beykiviðar-töflu* og bera milli *brjósta* sér.

No. III. Deal closer. Cut this symbol on a beechwood board and carry it in the centre of your chest, if you want to have success in buying and selling.

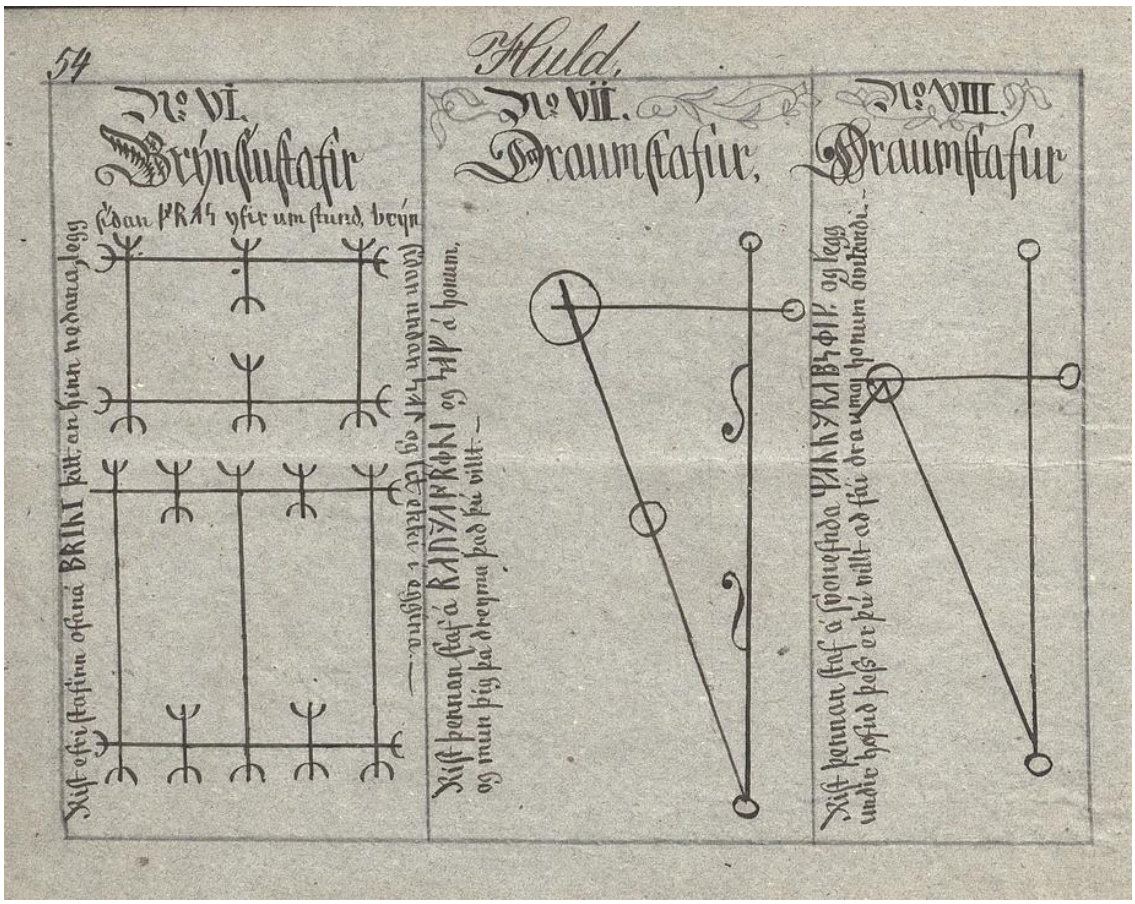
No. IV. Water protection. This symbol is to be worn under the right arm, when you need protection.

« May God give me luck[7] and blessings in Jesus' Name Amen. »

No. V. Deal closer. This symbol should be carved on a beechwood board and carried in the centre of ones chest.

[6] "beri millum" in the script means "ber í millum", i.e. bear in the middle (or carried between)

[7] "Lukka" in Old Icelandic means luck, however in modern Icelandic it means happiness.



No. VI. Brýnslustafir. Rist efri stafinn ofaná *brýni* þitt, an hinn neðana, legg síðan *gras* yfir um stund, brýn undan síðan *sól* og lít ekki í eggina

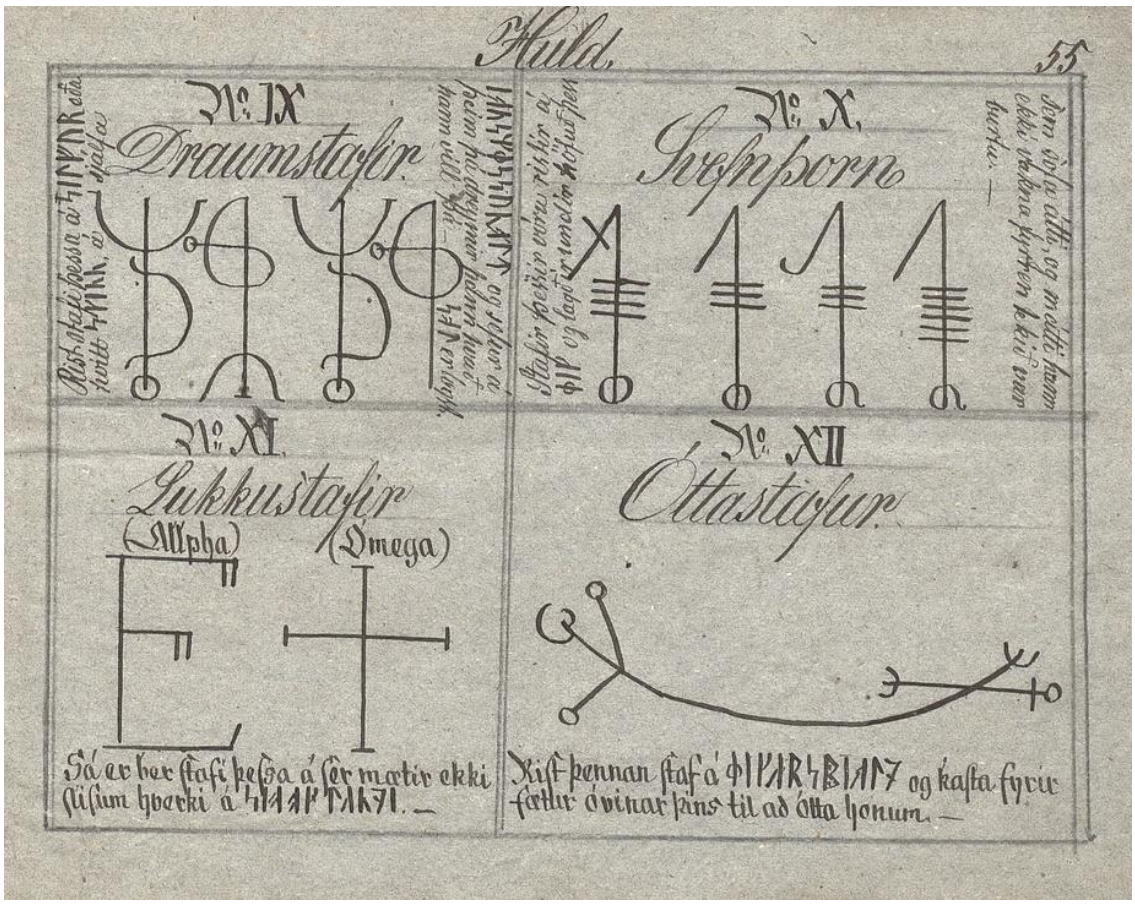
No. VII. Draumstafur. Rist þennan staf á *rauðagreni* og *sof* á honum, og mun þig þá dreyma það þú villt.

No. VIII. Draumstafur. Rist þennan staf á svonefnda *manndrápseik* og legg undir hofud þess er þú villt að fái drauma honum óvitandi.

No. VI. Whet Symbols. Scratch the upper symbol on top of your whetstone, the other underneath, then place grass over it for a while, then whet away from the sun and do not look at the cutting edge.

No. VII. Dream symbol. Carve this symbol on red spruce and sleep on it, then you will dream about what you want.

No. VIII. Dream symbol. Carve this symbol on so-called “man killing oak” and put it under the head of the one that is to get dreams according to your will, without them knowing.



No. IX. Draumstafir. Rist stafi þessa á *silfur* eða hvitt *skinn*, á sjálfa *Jónsmessunótt* og sefur á þeim þá dreymir þann hvað hann vill þá *sól* er lægst.

No. X. Svefnþorn. Stafir þessir vóru ristir á *eik* og lagðir undir höfuð þess sem sofa átti, og mátti hann ekki vakna fyrren tekið var burtu.

No. XI. Lukkustafir: Sá er ber stafi þessa á sér mætir ekki slysum hvergi á *sjó og landi*.

« (Allpha) (Omega) »

No. XII. Óttastafur. Rist þennan staf á *eikar spjald* og kasta fyrir fætur óvinar þins til að ótta honum.

No. IX. Dream symbols. Scratch these symbols on silver or white leather, on St John's Night[8] and they who sleep on them dream about what they want, when the sun is at its lowest.

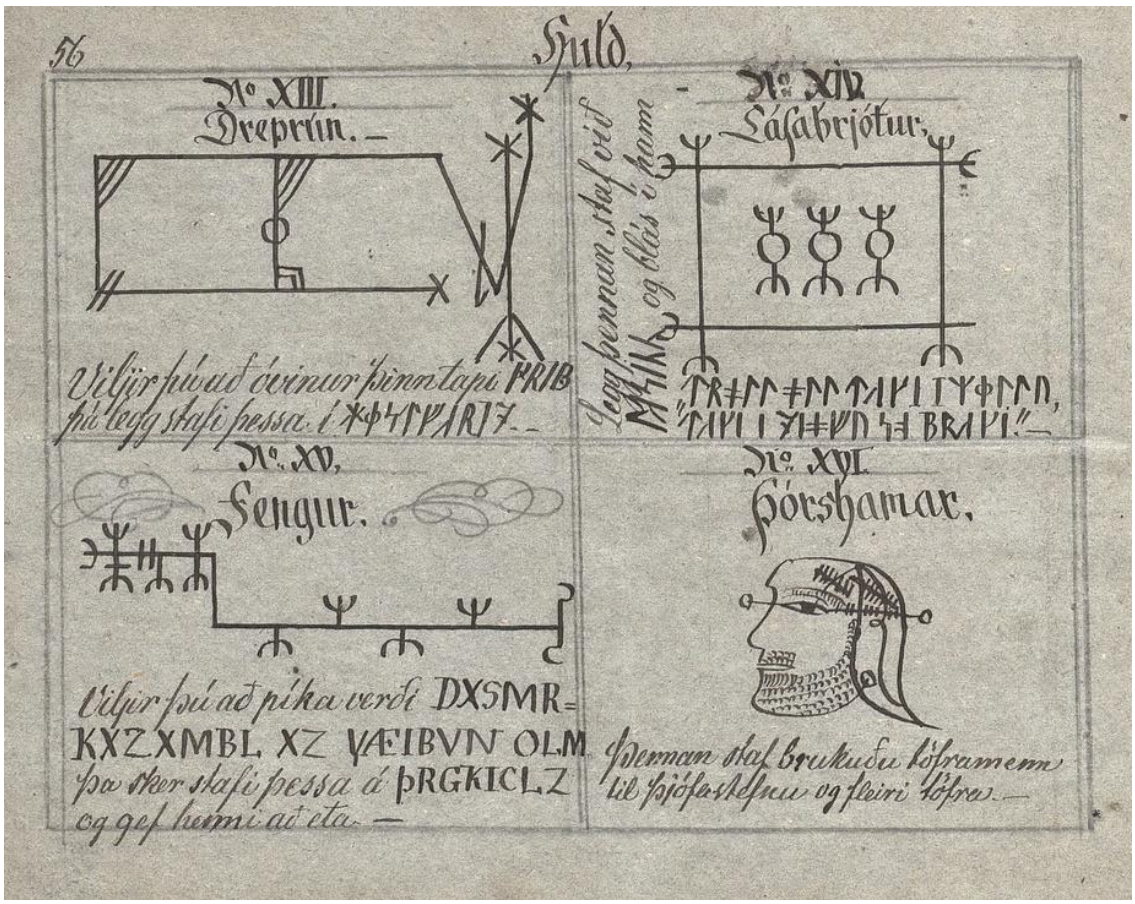
No. X. Sleep thorn. These symbols were carved on oak and laid under the head of whoever that was sleeping, then he could not wake up until it was taken away.

No. XI. Lucky symbols. Whosoever bears these staves on him will not meet with mishaps on sea and land.

« (Alpha) (Omega) »

No. XII. Fear symbols. Scratch these symbols on an oak tablet and throw it at the feet of your enemy, to make him afraid.

[8] St John's Day is known Midsummer: the Northern European solstice between 21st and 25th of June. However St John's Night may refer more specifically to St John's Eve: the night before the 24th of June.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Huld,
№ XIII.
Dreprún. –
Viljir þú að óvinur þinn tapi ᚠᚱᛁᛒ
þá legg stafi þessa á ᚼᚠᛋᛏᚠᛁᚱᚦᛁ.
№ XIV.
Lásabrjótur.
Legg þennan staf við lásinn og blás í hann
ᛏᚱᛅᛚᛚ ᛅᛚᛚ ᛏᛅᚴᛁ ᛁ ᛗᛁᛚᛚᚢ, ᛏᛅᚴᛁ ᛁ ᛏᛃᚢᚠᚢ[ᛚ] ᛋ[ᚢ]ᚮ ᛒᚱᛅᚴᛁ.“ –
№ XV.
Fengur.
Viljir þú að píka verði ᚦᚷᛊᛗᚱ=
ᚴᚷᛉᚷᚧᛗᛒᛚ ᚷᛉ ᛘᛅᛁᛒᚢᚾ ᛟᛚᛗ
þa sker stafi þessa á ᚦᚱᚵᚴᛁᚳᛚᛉ
og gef henni að eta. –
№ XVI
Þórshamar.
Þennan staf brukuðu töframenn til þjófastefnu og fleiri töfra. –

No. XIII. Dreprún. Viljir þú að óvinur þinn tapi *grip* þá legg stafi þessa í *hestfarið*.

No. XIV. Lásabrjótur. Legg þennan staf við *lásinn* og blás í hann

“*Tröll öll taki í mellu, taki í djöfu[l] s[v]o braki*”.

No. XV. Fengur. Viljir þú að píka verði *barnshafandi af völdum þin* þa sker stafi þessa á *osthleif* og gef henni að eta.

No. XVI. Þórshamar. Þennan staf brukuðu töframenn til þjófa stefnu og fleiri töfra.

No. XIII. Killing rune. If you want your enemy to lose their livestock, then put this symbol on the horse trail.

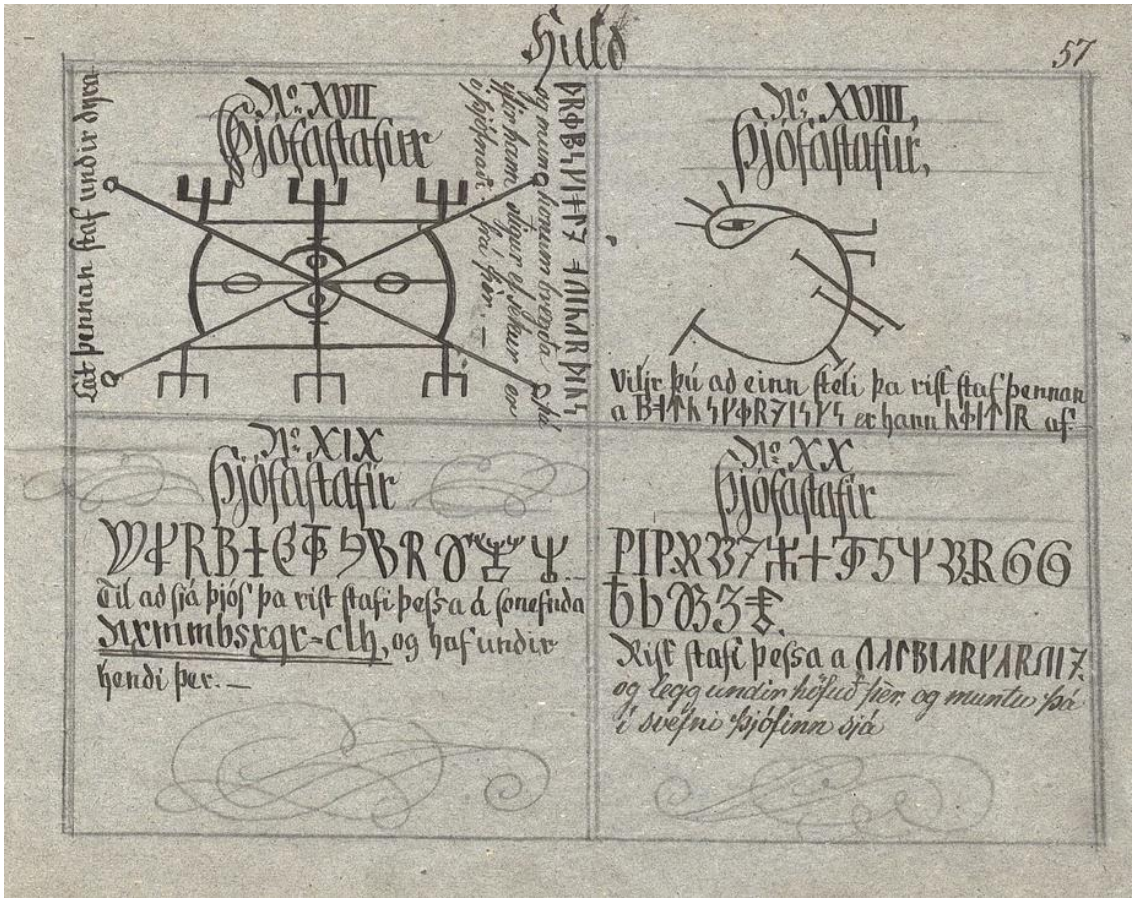
No. XIV. Lockbreaker. Put this symbol onto a lock and blow into it.

“All trolls grab the lock, [and] grab a demon, so that [combined] it cracks”.[9]

No. XV. Catch [a girl?]. If you want a girl to get pregnant by you, then cut this symbol into a piece of cheese and give it to her to eat.

No. XVI. Þórr’s hammer. Wizards used this symbol to summon [expose] thieves and do other magic.

[9] This small verse is difficult to translate: word forms and spelling appear to have been altered to achieve ryhme and alliteration, and word definitions extended to fit the context, eg. ‘mellu’ probably is from ‘mella’ where one uncommon definition is an iron door bolt, ‘braki’ can mean a breaking noise or broken pieces. The translation given here is speculative and will need futher investigation of folklore surrounding the original verse.



No. XVII. Þjófastafur. Lát þennan staf undir dyra *þrepskjöld ovinar þins* og mun honum bregða þá yfir hann stigur ef sekur er í þjófnaði frá þér.

No. XVIII. Þjófastafur. Viljr þú að einn steli þa rist staf þennan á botn skerdisks er hann neytir af.

No. XIX. Þjófastafir. Til að sjá þjóf þa rist stafi þessa á sonefnda *manndraps-eik*, og haf undir hendi þer.

No. XX. Þjófastafir. Rist stafi þessa á *valbjarkar-við* og legg undir höfuð þér, og muntu þá í svefni þjófinn sjá.

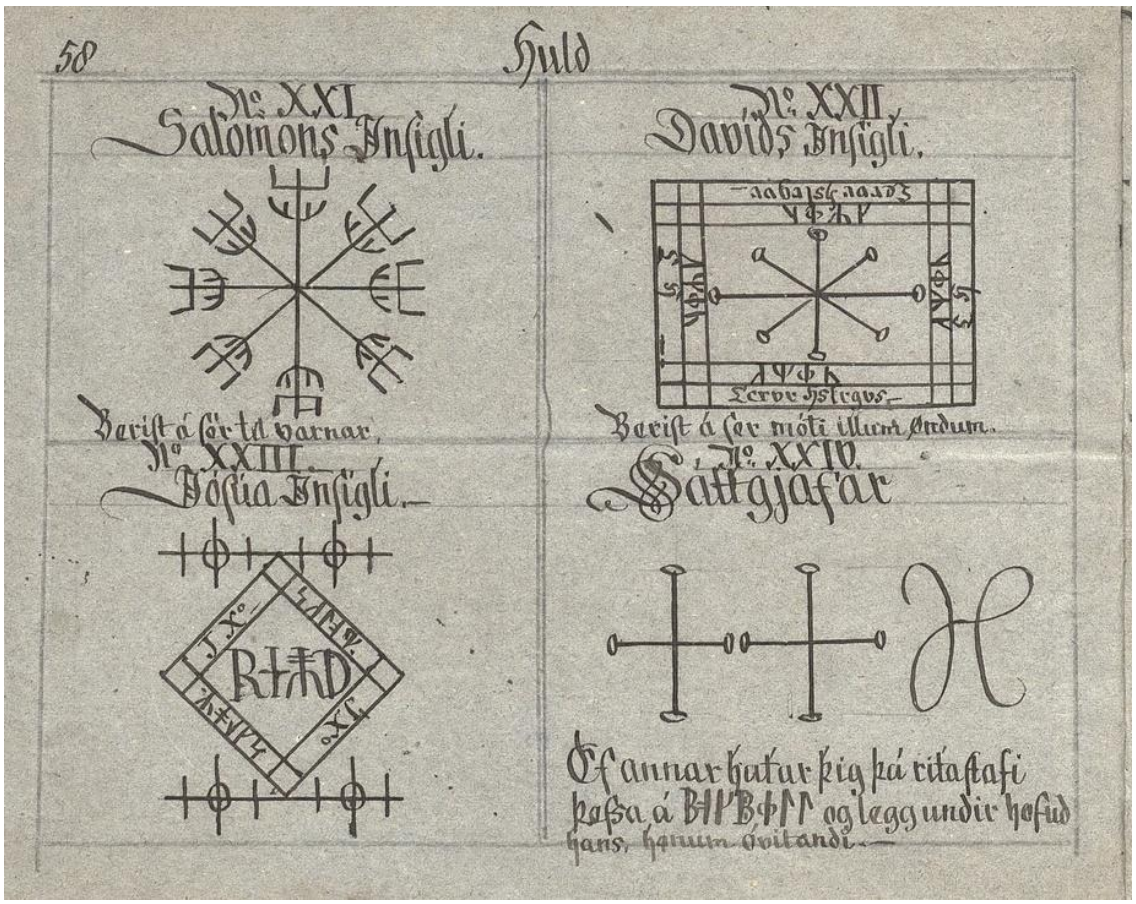
No. XVII. Thief symbol. Put this symbol under the doorstep of your enemy and he will recoil when he steps over it if he is guilty of theft from you.

No. XVIII. Thief symbol. Should you want someone to steal, then scratch this symbol on the bottom of the plate[10] he eats from.

No. XIX. Thief symbols. To see a thief, scratch these symbols in so called man-killing-oak and have it under your hand.

No. XX. Thief symbols. Scratch these symbols in birch-wood and put it beneath your head, then you will see the thief in your sleep.

[10] Wooden or carving dish.



No. XXI. Salómons Insigli. Berist á sér til varnar.

No. XXII. Daviðs Insigli. Berist á sér móti illum øndum.

« *Amen – Jesus Kristus – JK* »

No. XXIII. Jósúa Insigli.

« *J X° – Jeru – salom* »

No. XXIV. Sáttgjafar. Ef annar hatar þig þá rita stafi þessa, á *bókfell* og legg undir hofud hans, honum óvitandi

No. XXI. Solomon's seal. Carried on oneself for defence[11].

No. XXII. David's seal. Carried on oneself against evil spirits.

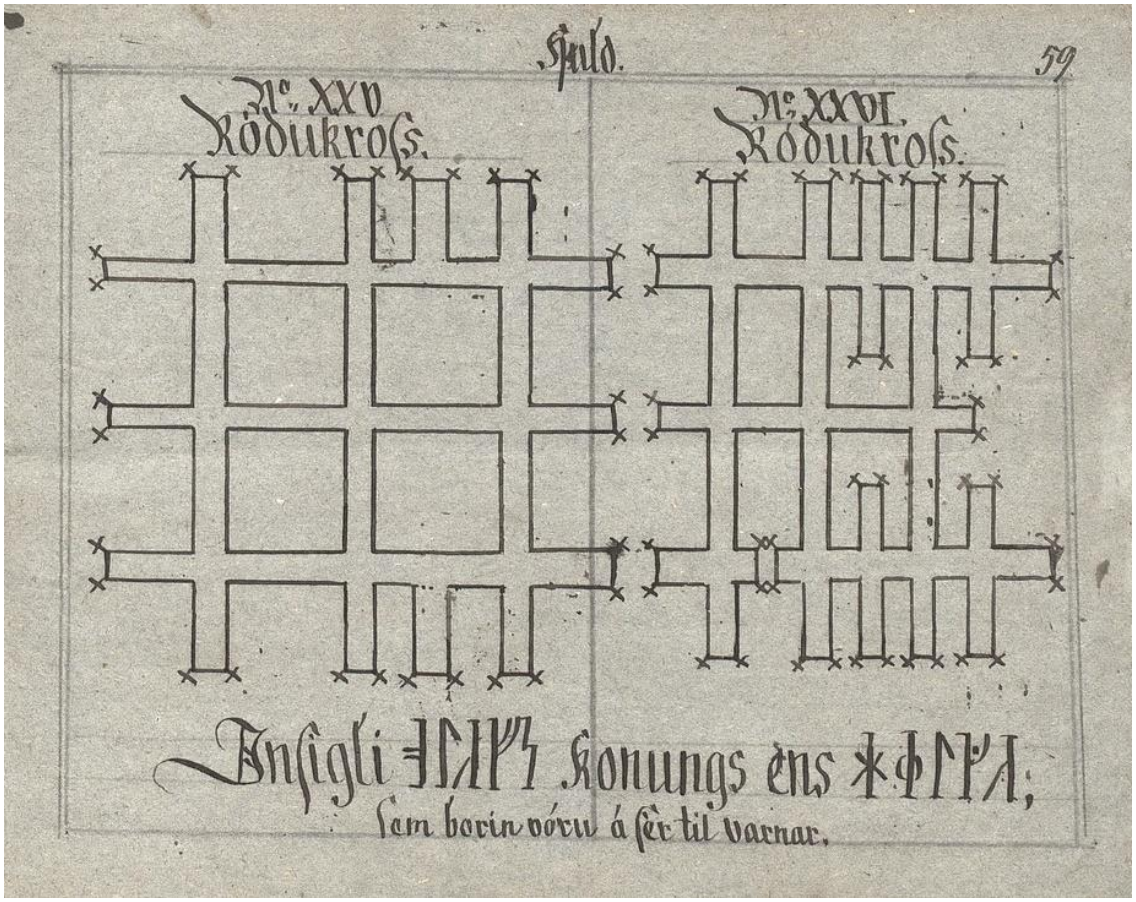
« Amen – Jesus Christ – JC »

No. XXIII. Seal of Joshua.

« J C – Jerusalem »

No. XXIV. Reconciler. If another hates you then write these symbols on parchment and put it under their head, without them knowing.

[11] Varnar (the gen. form of vörn) has often been translated as "protection", which is commonly the purpose for English talismans and charms. However Icelandic sources confirm both the modern and Old Icelandic translation is "defence".



No. XXVIII. Róðukross

No. XXIX. Róðukross

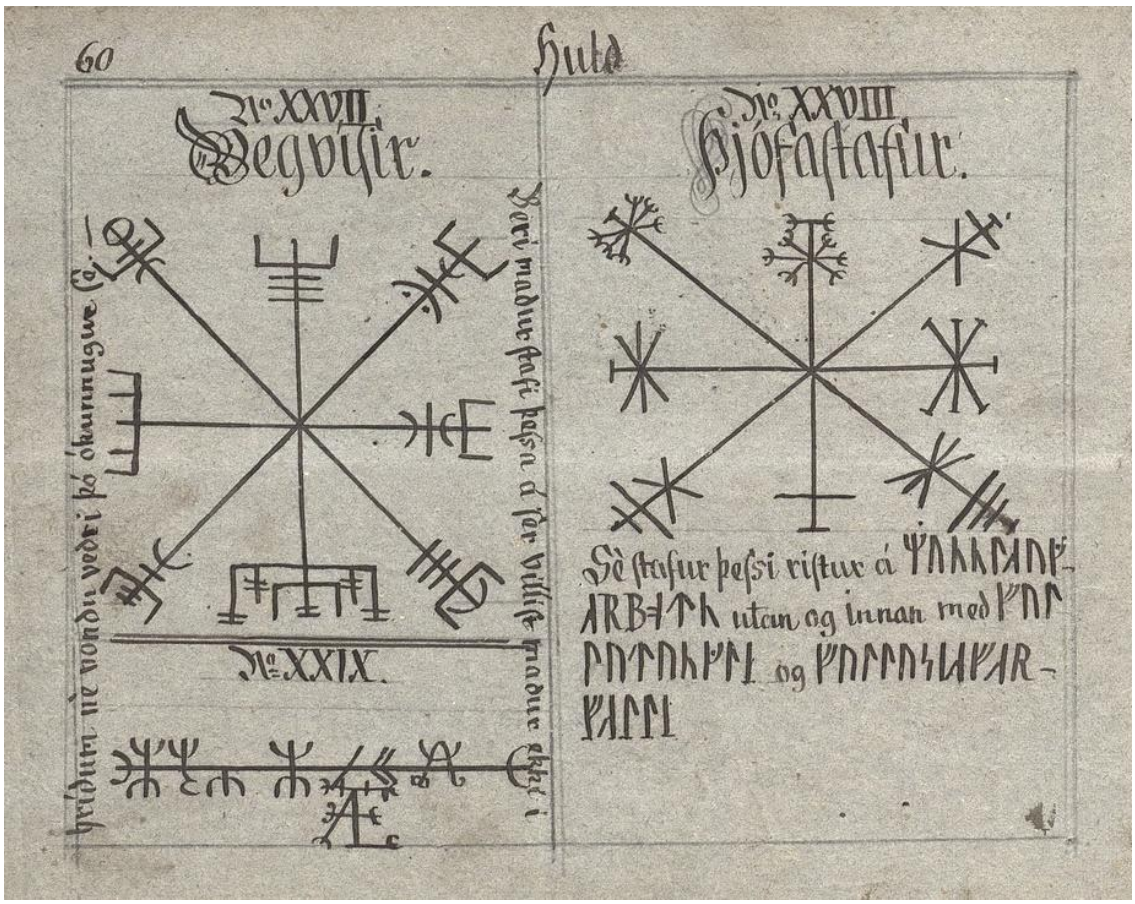
Insigli *Olafs* Konungs ens *Helga*; sem borin vóru á sér til varnar.

No. XXVIII Crucifix.

No. XXIX. Crucifix.

Seal of King Olaf the Holy[12], which was carried on oneself for defence.

[12] Referring to Olaf II Haraldsson, later known as St. Olaf, king of Norway from 1015 to 1028.



Nos. XXVII + XXIX. Vegvisir.

Beri maður stafi þessa á sér villist maður ekki í hríðum né vondu veðri þó ókunnugur sá.

XXVIII. Þjófastafur.

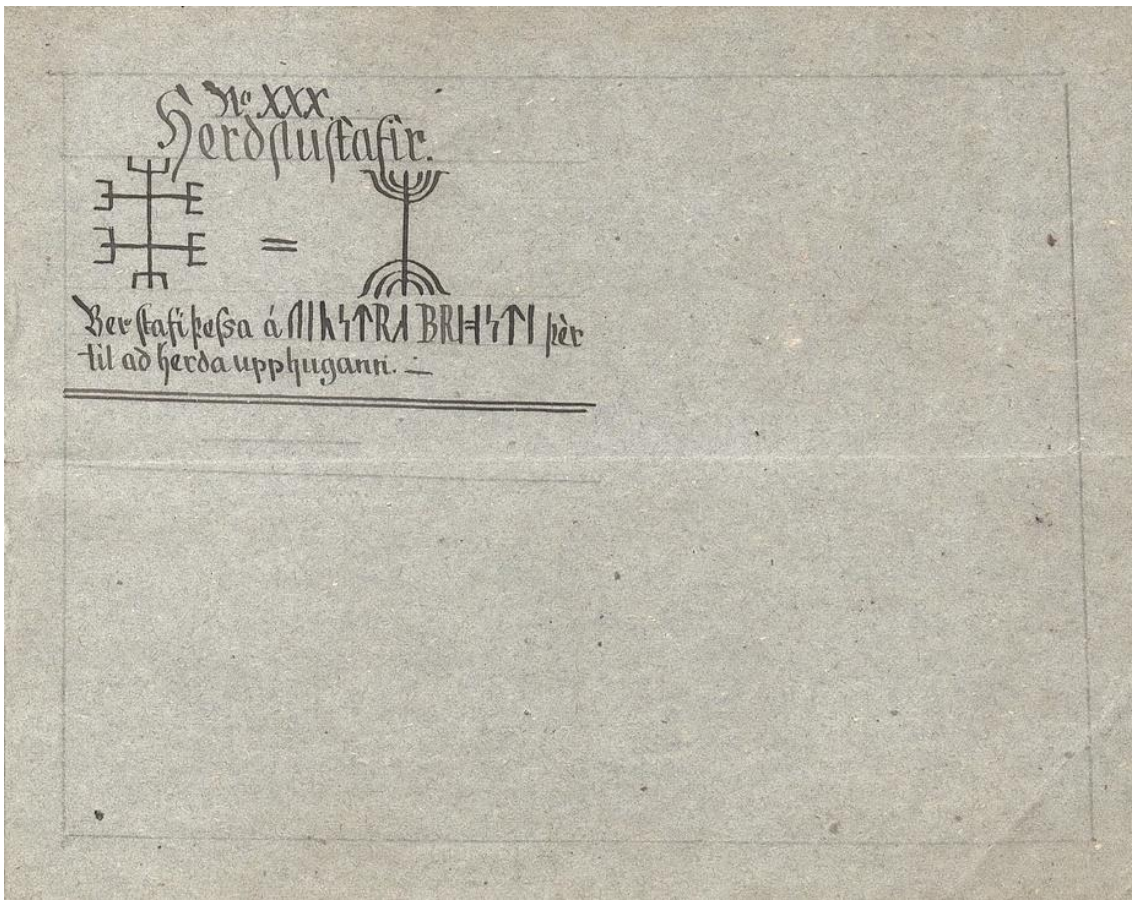
Sé stafur þessi ristur á *mundlaugar botn* utan og innan með *fullu-tungli* og *fullu-sjávarfalli*

Nos. XXVII + XXIX. Path Guide.

Carry this sign with you and you won't get lost in storms or bad weather, even though in unfamiliar surrounds.

No. XXVIII. Thief symbol.

If this symbol is scratched into the bottom of a wash bowl inside and outside at full moon and high tide ...



No. XXX. Herðslustafir. Ber stafí þessa á *vinstra brjósti* þér til að herða upphugann.

No. XXX. Strengthening symbols. Carry these symbols on your left chest, in order to strengthen up the mind.

Appendix I: Upcoming releases planned to make reference to Huld manuscript

Christopher Smith, *Icelandic Magic: aims, tools and techniques of the Icelandic sorcerers*. Publisher: Avalonia Books.

Stephen E. Flowers, Ph.D., *Icelandic Magic - The Mystery and Power of the Galdrabók Grimoire*. Publisher: Inner Traditions.

Justin Foster, *Ólafur Davíðsson's "Isländische Zauberzeichen und Zauberbücher" an English translation*. Independant release.

Bibliography: Primary sources

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Ólafur Davíðsson, "Isländische Zauberzeichen und Zauberbücher". *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*. Berlin: Verlag Von A Asher & Co. 1903, Volume 13. Pp 150–67 and 267–79.

Stephen E. Flowers, Ph.D., "Appendix A – From the Huld Manuscript", *Icelandic Magic - The Galdrabók – An Icelandic Book of Magic*. Texas: Rûna-Raven Press, 2005, 2nd Ed. Pp 60–67.